

AMPLIFIED MIND POWER RESEARCH IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

*Behind the scenes,
the CIA had an
abiding interest in
watching the
progress of Soviet
parapsychology and
in exploring ESP
techniques for its
own covert
purposes.*

Part 3 of 3

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THE CIA'S EARLY INTEREST IN ESP PROJECTS

The following text, released by the Central Intelligence Agency under the Freedom of Information Act, deals with a twofold project designed to examine the potential use of extrasensory perception for "practical problems of intelligence". The author of the memorandum outlined a project of at least three years in length and estimated the cost for its first year.

The project was envisioned as aiming at reliability and repeatability among "exceptionally gifted individuals" and at the utilisation of "scattered" ESP results through "statistical concentration". Names, telephone numbers and other items that might permit the identification of individuals or departments were deleted by the CIA at the time the document was released in 1981, and such deletions are noted in the text.

There are no indications of whether the project was actually undertaken, nor is it clear whether the text is an interoffice memorandum between two agency officials or was addressed to a CIA official by a researcher working under a contract or grant outside the agency. The memorandum is dated January 7, 1952, and its full text follows:

If, as now appears to us established beyond question, there is in some persons a certain amount of capacity for extrasensory perception (ESP), this fact, and consequent developments leading from it, should have significance for professional intelligence service. Research on the problems of extrasensory perception has been in the hands of a very few workers and has not been directed to the purpose here in mind, or to any practical application whatever. However, having established certain basic facts, now, after long and patient efforts and more resistance than assistance, it appears that we are ready to consider practical application as a research problem in itself.

There are two main lines of research that hold specific promise and need further development with a view to application to the intelligence project. These two are by no means all that could be done to contribute to that end; rather, everything that adds anything to our understanding of what is taking place in ESP is likely to give us advantage in the problems of use and control. Therefore, the Rockefeller-financed project of finding the personality correlates of ESP and the excursions into the question of ESP in animals, recently begun, as well as several major lines of inquiry, are all to the good.

The two special projects on investigation that ought to be pushed in the interest of the project under discussion are, first, the search for and development of exceptionally gifted individuals who can approximate perfect success in ESP test performance, and, second, the statistical concentration of scattered ESP performance, so as to enable an ultimately perfect reliability and application. We have something definite to go on in each case, and it is with this in mind that we are inclined to make a serious effort to push the research in the direction of reliable application to the practical problem of intelligence.

First, a word about the "special subject". On a number of occasions, through the years, several different scientific investigators have, under conditions of excellent control, obtained strikingly long runs of unbroken success from subjects in ESP tests. The conditions allowed no alternative. At least one of them occurred with the target cards and experimenter in one building and the subject several hundred yards away in another. Due to the elusive, unconscious nature of ESP ability, these same

subjects could not reliably repeat, and during the years of investigation under the conditions of extreme limitations with which the work has had to be done, it has not been possible to solve the problem of overcoming this difficulty and bringing the capacity under reliable control. We have recently learned of two persons definitely reported to be able to keep up their rate of almost unbroken success over much longer stretches of time. These investigations have been going on in scientific laboratories, and from reports in our hands we have no reason to question their reliability. We have not been able to bring the subjects here or extend our investigation to the laboratories concerned. It looks, however, as if in these two cases the problem of getting and maintaining control over the ESP function has been solved. If it has, the rest of the way to practical application seems to us a matter of engineering with no insuperable difficulties. Even if there is anything wrong with one or both of these cases, this more extended control must come eventually, we think, and we have had in mind many lines of research, designed to try to bring it [about].

I shall not enlarge on the practical and technological developments that would be followed in bringing a capacity, such as that demonstrated in these card tests, of getting information in a practical situation. It will be seen that if a subject under control test conditions can identify the order of a deck of cards, several hundred yards away in another building, or can "identify" the thought of another person several hundred miles away, the adaptation to the practical requirements for obtaining secret information should not give serious difficulty.

The other practice on which research should be concentrated, we believe, is that of developing ways of using small percentages of success in such a way that reliable judgment can be made. While we are still exploring the advantages of this instrument of application, we have gone far enough to see how it is entirely possible and practical to use a small percentage of success, above that expected by chance alone, so as to concentrate the slight significance attaching to a given trial to the point where reliance can be placed upon the final application to the problem in hand. I believe you went into this matter thoroughly enough with [name of individual or unit deleted] that I will not need to review here the actual devices and procedures by which this concentration of reliability is brought about.

If we were to undertake to push this research as far and as fast as we can reasonably well do in the direction of practical application to the problems of intelligence, it would be necessary to be exceedingly careful about thorough cloaking of the undertaking.

I should not want anyone here in the [word or words deleted], except [two names apparently deleted] and myself, to know about it. We are all three cleared for security purposes to the level of "Secret". I would perhaps feel bound to have confidential discussion on the matter with [name or names apparently deleted]. Funds necessary for the support of the work would understandably carry no identification and raise no questions.

If there is no reason why there could not be, at any time it was justified, a renegotiation of additional needs that might arise that cannot be anticipated at this stage, I should prefer to proceed with some restraint in estimating what such a project would involve in the matter of funds. I shall estimate a research team of five persons working on this project primarily. There will be no careful line drawn. Three will be a great deal of exchange and, of course, no designation in the [several words deleted], a separate unit. For our purposes at the moment, however, the [deleted] can consider that such a test might consist of [names apparently deleted], a well-qualified statistician and two research workers qualified not only to handle groups of subjects but assist in the evaluative procedures as well.

The total salary estimate for these five people would be between \$22,500 and \$25,000. In order to take advantage of mechanical aid in the statistical work and such other matters as travelling expenses, it would be advisable to add \$5,000 as a conservative estimate. I think \$30,000 would be well spent on the first year. It is almost anyone's guess as to what the next year would lead us into, but it would almost certainly be more and probably a great deal more. I doubt if it would be profitable to try to fix it at this time.

Frustrated as we have been by having to deal in short-term projects and the wastefulness of effort that accompanies the attempt to do long-term research projects on that basis, I am about ready to say that without pretty definite assurance of at least a three-year program I should not want to try to assemble the personnel, design and research program and put the overall effort into what is really a major undertaking like this.

Much as I feel the urgency of having our country have as much a lead as possible in this matter, I do not think it is advisable to undertake it unless there is a certain amount of confidence on both sides of the agreement, and these short-term grants-in-aid are, after all, usually measures of limited confidence.

I might add that, while the Russians have both officially and through their leading psychologists disapproved of our kind of work, as they would have to do because of the philosophy of Marxian materialism, I have seen at least one reference to the fact that they have done experiments on our lines, giving a materialist interpretation.

If you can give me any information on this, I would appreciate it. Sometime we might discuss what the Nazis undertook to do...

CONGRESSIONAL ASSESSMENT OF PSI RESEARCH

Between 1969 and 1981, classified documentation regarding Soviet psi research efforts had become abundant but never released to the public, which remained ignorant of the "threat situation". Congressional leaders, however, were provided copies and extracts of the most sensitive documents.

The result was that in June 1981, the Committee on Science and Technology of the US House of Representatives issued a staff report that called for "a serious assessment" of parapsychology research in the United States.

These investigations have been going on in scientific laboratories, and from reports in our hands we have no reason to question their reliability.

The report took note of "the potentially powerful and far-reaching implications of knowledge in this field" and observed that the Soviet Union "is widely acknowledged to be supporting such research at a far higher and more official level" than is the case in the United States.

The report submitted the following questions "for congressional consideration": "Is funding for such research adequate? What is the credibility of such research in the sciences, humanities, and religions? How does the public perceive the credibility of research in this field from both a subjective and objective point of view? What should the Federal role in such research be and what agencies are or should be involved in such research?"

These suggestions and questions were part of a comprehensive "Survey of Science and Technology Issues, Present and Future", commissioned by the committee. In a section on Research on the Physics of Consciousness (Parapsychology), it defined the issue this way:

"Recent experiments in remote viewing and other studies of parapsychology suggest that there exists an 'interconnectiveness' of the human mind with other minds and with matter. This interconnectiveness would appear to be functional in nature and amplified by intent and emotion."

The report noted the history of studies in parapsychology generally, and in telepathy and psychokinesis specifically, and said:

"Attempts in history to obtain insights into the ability of the human mind to function in as-yet misunderstood ways goes back thousands of years. Only recently, serious and scientifically based attempts have been made to understand and measure the functional nature of mind-mind and mind-matter interconnectiveness. Experiments in mind-mind interconnectiveness have yielded some encouraging results. Experiments in mind-matter interconnectiveness (psychokinesis) have yielded less compelling and more enigmatic results. The implications of these experiments is that the human mind may be able to obtain information independent of geography and time."

The report acknowledged there could be "no certainty as to what results will emerge from basic and exploratory research" now underway, so that its potential importance and "its implications for the United States and the world at large can only be speculated upon". It then listed several categories on which parapsychological studies might have an impact. One of these categories had to do with national defence.

"In the area of national defense, there are obvious implications of one's ability to identify distant sites and affect sensitive instruments or other humans. A general recognition of the degree of interconnectiveness of mind could have far-reaching social and political implications for this Nation and the world."

The congressional report noted that studies in parapsychology had "received relatively low funding". It attributed this to the fact that "credibility and potential yield of

such research is widely questioned, although less today than ever before". It added:

"Thus far, the quality of research that even the strongest proponent of such research believes is necessary has been lacking due in part to low funding."

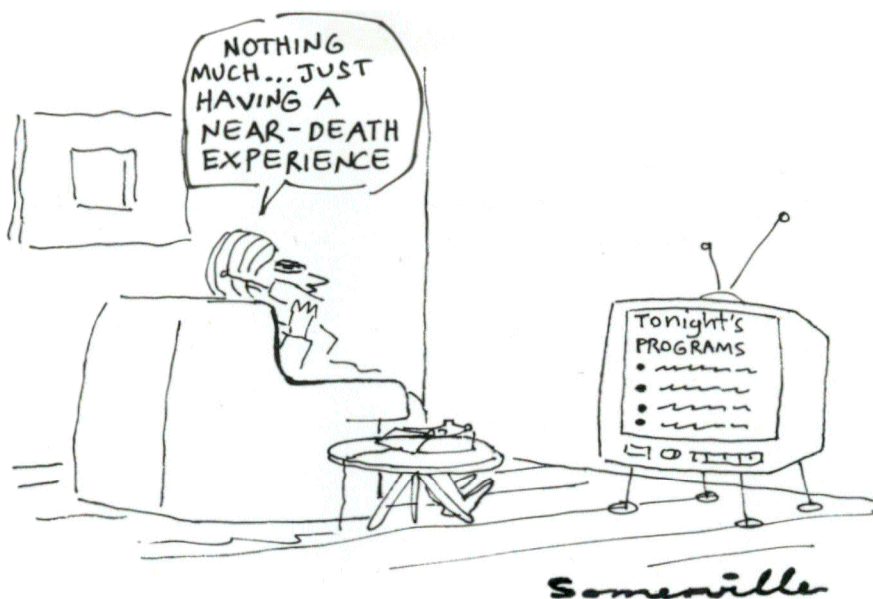
Such cautious, obviously well-informed appraisal of parapsychology on the part of a congressional body was unprecedented. Until then, Congress as a whole had not taken cognisance of ESP potentials in peace or war. Only one of its members, Representative Charles Rose, Democrat of North Carolina and a member of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, had shown long-range interest in psychic studies generally and their warfare potentials in particular.

Agencies of the Federal government sporadically encouraged ESP research. But, given the ubiquitous nature of government concerns, such efforts often seemed no more than an expression of personal interests, the cautious involvement of "closet parapsychologists" at various levels in one or another agency. Individuals and groups that might want to follow the ideas expressed by the staff report on science and technology were likely to be held back by fear of ridicule, whether from within Congress or in the media.

As columnist Jack Anderson had phrased it, the Central Intelligence Agency had its "mouth watering" when it looked into Soviet research on remote viewing. Anderson wrote on March 20, 1981: "Who'd need a mole in the Kremlin when a psychic sitting at a desk in Washington could zoom-in mentally on a super-secret Soviet missile site or a Politburo meeting?"

One of Anderson's researchers, Ron McRae, was alerted to what he interpreted as serious armed forces interest in the psychic when he read Lt Col. Alexander's article in *Military Review*, late in 1980. McRae told another Washington writer, Randy Fitzgerald, that the article had convinced him "there were people in the Pentagon who were really taking it seriously".

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Anderson/McRae erroneously claimed that a psychic task force, budgeted at \$6 million per year, had been established in the Pentagon "basement", and that the National Security Agency was examining the use of extrasensory perception in its code-breaking work.

Anderson's flippant terminology seemed designed to ridicule his findings or allegations. He wrote of "wacky projects" that covered "ESP weapons that can brainwash or incapacitate enemy leaders by thought transfer, deliver nuclear bombs instantaneously thousands of miles away by psychic energy, or even create a protective 'time warp' to make incoming Soviet missiles explode harmlessly in the past". He added: "The CIA, though historically less alarmist about the Red Menace than the Pentagon spooks are, also has been monitoring Soviet ESP research and pondering the possibility of less bizarre psychic weapons."

CIA's EXPERIMENTS IN MEDIUMSHIP

While the 1952 ESP project mentioned earlier may never have been undertaken, it seems certain that the Central Intelligence Agency did engage in psychic experiments. One source of information on this subject is ex-CIA employee Victor Marchetti, who wrote several books based on his 14 years with the agency.

Marchetti, who tended to be critical of the CIA's activities, has said that it once sought to establish mediumistic communication with the spirits of agents who had died. He recalled that the agency's "scientific spooks" were "progressing into parapsychology, experimenting with mediums in efforts to contact dead agents, with psychics in attempts to divine the intentions of the Kremlin leadership and even with stranger phenomena".

Marchetti asserted that the CIA had tried to make contact, through a medi-

um, with Oleg Penkovsky, a colonel in the Soviet Army who had been one of its most valuable contacts during his lifetime.

On May 11, 1963, Penkovsky appeared before the Soviet Supreme Court in Moscow, where he was declared guilty of treason and sentenced to be shot to death. As a colonel in the military intelligence branch of the Soviet Army, he had been assigned to artillery in a "civilian capacity". Penkovsky was a member of the Soviet State Committee for the Coordination of Scientific Research Activities, with responsibilities in domestic and international technological liaison and development. He had been an agent for Western intelligence agencies, presumably British services as well as the CIA. There is a simple kind of logic in trying to keep in touch with such a valuable agent, even after death.

It is speculative, of course, whether such contact can actually be established, whether spirit communication can be specific and reliable and could be checked against information from other sources or merely used to fill gaps in existing data.

It may be regarded as imaginative rather than foolish to have tried to reach someone like Penkovsky through a medium (or several mediums, cross-checking any resulting information for correlations and deviations). But the number of qualified mediums is limited and it would be difficult to keep such an assignment secret, even if the mediums concerned did not know whom they were expected to contact.

Marchetti said that, after Penkovsky had been executed, someone in the CIA had suggested, "Why don't we contact him?", and

that this suggestion had led to the agency's becoming "involved with mediums".

"They began to contact our own dead agents," Marchetti said, "as well as dead agents from the other side."

If the project expanded beyond an attempt to get in touch with the spirit of Penkovsky, it may be assumed that at least some of the mediumistic messages had been satisfactory or at least promising to CIA staff members.

"There is no indication that they have stopped," Marchetti said, "and no reason why they would."

At any rate, Marchetti's recollections suggest that the CIA had been alert to psychic potentials, no matter how unproved, in the service of intelligence-gathering.

NOVEL BIOPHYSICAL INFORMATION TRANSFER

The CIA was certainly justified in keeping an eye on Soviet studies. References have earlier been made to a report on Soviet parapsychology commissioned by the Central Intelligence Agency from the AiResearch Manufacturing Company of Torrance, California.

The research group's experts suggested that, in view of Soviet studies, the US government should initiate developments in what it called

Novel Biophysical Information Transfer (NBIT) mechanisms that "are functional", although "they may have no relationship to common parapsychological phenomena".

The report (dated January 14, 1976) advised that such studies should be interdisciplinary, as this type of research "crosses so many widely different scientific disciplines".

The report noted that one Soviet researcher, Professor Gennady Sergeev of Leningrad, appeared to have perfected a mechanism capable

of measuring human brain function from a distance of five metres. The report observed that Sergeev's instrument was classified and that "no credible description of it is available—only allusions to its existence".

The AiResearch report traced reference to the Sergeev device in Russian scientific literature, while noting that "there is reason to doubt the Russian claim". It speculated that:

"...it is possible that a sensitive electric or magnetic sensor, or some combination of the two, would detect electrical signals from a human body at a distance of five meters.

"Although it is unlikely that the output of such an instrument would be a direct measure of the EEG, it would provide information of interest to a police interrogator, such as the strength and rate of the heartbeat, the tensing and relaxation of muscles, the depth and rate of breathing, and perhaps the electrical properties of the skin. The uses to which the instrument would be put are reasons enough for official secrecy about its operating principles."

The report noted Sergeev's professional competence, concluded its analysis with the assumption that Sergeev's remote sensor "does exist, in some form", and examined the possible development of remote sensors by Soviet researchers "following the indicated lines of investigation".

Where, the report asked, could Sergeev's findings lead? It made this cautious forecast: "Perhaps the Russians have, in fact, developed such instruments; perhaps they are going to do so. Perhaps they have tried and have not been successful."

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Possible sensor developments discussed in the following paragraphs are not meant to be exhaustive; rather, they are speculative and offered as examples of what may or might be:

"A tuneable antenna for detecting low-frequency, very-low-frequency, or extremely-low-frequency electromagnetic radiation could be used. The Russians believe both in mental telepathy and in a prosaic physical mechanism for it. The most probable mechanism is electromagnetic radiation.

"A tuneable antenna could be used in two types of experiments: trying to detect the radiation from the telepathic agent, and trying to generate radiation of the right frequency to interfere with telepathic receptions.

"A neutrino detector may be used. Both the Russian Je. Parnov (*Nauka i Religia*, No. 3, pp. 44–49, 1966) and the American Martin Ruderfer ("Neutrino Theory of Extrasensory Perception" in *Abstracts: 1st International Conference of Psychotronics, Vol. 2*, Prague, pp. 9–13, June 1973) have suggested neutrinos as the means of transmitting thought from one mind to another.

"One of the collaborators of the present study, J. Eerkens, had a plausible hypothesis about the production and detection of neutrinos that could be experimentally tested by relatively modest expenditures for equipment and labor. A magnetic field or field gradient detector could be used.

"The Russians and other Eastern Europeans are greatly interested in dowsing, or finding ground water. A currently popular theory of dowsing is that the human body is sensitive to small changes (temporal and spatial) in the magnetic field of the Earth, such as might be produced by water near the surface of the ground. If the human body can generate as well as sense magnetic fields, such a human magnetism might be the basis of some form of thought transference or psychokinesis."

In conclusion, the AiResearch study suggested five areas of research as "the most fruitful lines of investigation", as follows:

1. The Psychophysiology and Psychology of Awareness of NBIT

This area includes such questions as: What are the modes of awareness that facilitate NBIT? How to select and train individuals for high resolution and reliable performance? Which of the possible transmission mechanisms can humans utilise for NBIT?

2. Transmission Mechanisms

This area includes such questions as: What are possible NBIT transmission mechanisms? How is information transmitted from the source to the recipient?

3. The Physiology and Biochemistry of Human Transducer Mechanisms

In this area, research would be conducted on physiology and biochemistry of reception and receptor mechanism.

4. Statistical Development

This area includes nonstationary analysis of random data, deviation from normally distributed data, and new developments in communication and information theory with respect to noisy channels.

5. Development of Non-Contact Physiology Sensors

This area includes development of MEG, thermography, low-frequency electric field monitors and other sensors.

Translated from its technical terminology, the report suggested to the CIA, or other US government agencies, that the conditions under which telepathy and related capacities operate should be more fully explored. Such a study would, of course, be designed to harness, control, boost and direct telepathic and other psi abilities.

SUPERSTITION OR EXPLORATION?

Among Washington's superstitious fears was concern over scathing criticism dispensed by Senator William Proxmire, Democrat from Wisconsin.

The monthly magazine *Discover* (February 1982), which was consistently sceptical of parapsychological claims, spoke of him as "one of the capital's most visible and colorful politicians, and certainly one of the wittiest". It wrote:

"An energetic foe of government waste and boondoggles, Proxmire is perhaps best known for his Golden Fleece of the Month Award, intended to publicize what the senator considers to be examples of foolish Federal spending."

The magazine concluded that the senator at times displayed a

"know-nothing attitude about science", but credited him with "being bright enough to know that scientific curiosity had been responsible for many of the civilization's greatest advances".

Imaginative research was given strong support by President Ronald Reagan on March 23, 1983, when he advocated intensified studies in so-called "Star Wars" technology. The President spoke of futuristic means designed to "eliminate" nuclear weapons. Space-based lasers, particle-beam weapons and similar devices were publicly discussed. Yet open-ended exploration of antinuclear

weaponry might well include "mind amplification" and other psychic warfare elements.

Washington's dilemma over psi studies placed it firmly between the recommendations to the Committee on Science and Technology and the real or imagined wrath of Senator Proxmire. It was thus caught squarely between the two Big Cs: Courage and Caution.

About the Author:

Following service with the US Office of War Information in World War II, Martin Ebon then worked on the staff of the Foreign Policy Association, and with the US Information Agency during the Korean War. From 1953 to 1965 he was administrative assistant of the Parapsychology Association in New York and travelled extensively on behalf of the Association's research endeavours. He has become a well-known figure in parapsychology circles. His lectures, reviews, research reports, magazine articles and books (over 60 of them) reflect serious treatment of the field. He is a lifelong researcher/writer/analyst regarding the political and scientific developments of Eastern European countries, the former Soviet Union and post-Communist Russia as well as Asia and the People's Republic of China.

In addition to his many books on parapsychological matters, Ebon is the author of: *World Communism Today*; *Malenkov: Stalin's Successor*; a biography of Ernesto "Che" Guevara; *Psychic Warfare* (1983); *The Andropov File*, a biography of the former head of the KGB; *The Soviet Propaganda Machine* (1987); and *KGB: Death and Rebirth* (1994).

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